

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA
CHARLOTTE DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

vs.

KENNETH JEROME WATKINS,
Defendant.

DOCKET NO. 3:20-CR-385

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ROUGH DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

Monday, June 6, 2022

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Rough Draft Transcript of proceedings in the at the
June 6, 2022, jury trial before the Honorable Judge Robert J.
Conrad, Jr. Presiding.

N O T I C E

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Kathy Cortopassi, RDR, CPC

704-350-7493 kathy_cortopassi@ncwd.uscourts.gov

PROCEEDINGS

THE COURT: Good morning, everyone. We're here in the matter of the United States versus Kenneth Watkins: To select a jury and begin trial. Are the parties ready to proceed?

MR. GUINN: We're ready, Your Honor.

MR. RAEL: Yes. We're ready. We do have a motion to bring to the Court before we bring in the jury. Or we can bring them in and do it after. Any way the Court wishes.

THE COURT: Let's select the jury and then we'll see where we are. Madame Clerk, would you call the jury?

(Jury pool enters the courtroom at 9:34 a.m.)

(Proceedings involving the jury have been sealed and are not included in this rough draft.)

THE COURT: Members of the Jury, now that you have been sworn and impaneled, I'm going to give you some preliminary instructions to guide you in your participation in the trial.

You have two options, neither one of them are very good. But you can see my face on the monitors in front of you. Or those of you who want to swivel in your chairs and listen to me, you can do that, as well. It will be your duty to find from the evidence what the facts are. You and you alone will be the judges of the facts. You will then have to apply to those facts the law as the Court will give it to

1 you. And nothing the Court may say or do during the course
2 of the trial is intended to indicate in any way what your
3 verdict should be. The evidence from which you will find the
4 facts will consist of the testimony of witnesses, documents
5 and other things received into the record as exhibits, and
6 any facts that the lawyers agree to or stipulate to or that
7 the Court may instruct you to find.

8 Certain things are not evidence. They include
9 things like statements, arguments and questions by the
10 lawyers; objections to questions are not evidence. Lawyers
11 have a duty to their clients to make objections when they
12 believe that evidence is being offered for an improper
13 purpose under the Rules of Evidence. You should not be
14 influenced by the objection. If it is sustained, you would
15 ignore the question. If the objection is overruled, you
16 would treat the answer like any other.

17 If you are instructed that some item of evidence is
18 received for a limited purpose only, you must follow that
19 instruction.

20 Testimony that the Court excludes or tells you to
21 disregard is not evidence and must not be considered.

22 And again, anything you may have seen or heard
23 outside the courtroom is not evidence must be disregarded.
24 You are to decide the case solely on the evidence presented
25 here in the courtroom.

1 Now, the Court instructs you that you are the sole
2 judges of the credibility of the witnesses and the weight
3 their testimony deserves. While there is no absolute or
4 arbitrary guide or measure by which you determine the
5 truthfulness of a witness, the Court will point out to you
6 some general factors which may assist you in making that
7 determination, and these factors include: Whether the
8 witness has any motive or reason for being truthful or
9 untruthful; the witness's interest, if any, in the outcome of
10 the case; whether there has appeared from the witness's
11 attitude or conduct any bias, prejudice, or feeling which may
12 cause that person's testimony to be influenced; whether the
13 testimony bears the earmarks of truthfulness; to what extent,
14 if any, it is corroborated or confirmed by other testimony
15 which is not questioned; or by known or admitted facts. You
16 may also consider the intelligence and mental capacity of a
17 witness and the witness's opportunity to have accurate
18 knowledge of the matters to which the person testifies. I
19 instruct you that you may believe all that a witness says or
20 none or believe in part and disbelieve in part.

21 Now, a few words about your conduct as jurors.
22 First, I instruct you that during the trial you are not to
23 discuss the case even amongst yourselves or with anyone else
24 nor should you permit anyone to discuss it with you. Until
25 you retire to the jury room at the end of the case to

1 deliberate on your verdict, you simply are not to talk about
2 the case.

3 If anyone should try to talk to you about it, you
4 should bring to it the Court's attention promptly.

5 Second, do not read or listen to anything touching
6 on the case in any way. You as jurors must decide this case
7 based solely on the evidence presented here within the four
8 walls of this courtroom. This means that during the trial,
9 you must not conduct any independent research about the case,
10 the matters in the case, the individuals or groups involved
11 in the case, or legal concepts.

12 Now, because this is so different from how we
13 conduct our everyday affairs, I really want to stress this
14 point, that you simply are not to do any research on the case
15 while serving as a juror. And our normal course, I think we
16 even had it in jury selection that our normal instinct is to
17 go to the social media and Google something and find an
18 answer. And you simply are not to do this at all in this
19 case. You cannot use any electronic device or media, such as
20 telephone, cell phones, smartphone, iPhone, blackberry or
21 computer; the Internet, any Internet service, any Internet
22 chatroom, blog, or website such as Facebook, my space,
23 LinkedIn, YouTube or Twitter; or any text or instant
24 messaging service to communicate to anyone any information
25 about the case or to conduct any research about the case

1 while you serve as a juror.

2 Your duty to follow this instruction is a serious
3 responsibility. The failure to follow it may result in being
4 found in contempt of court.

5 Finally, do not form any opinion until all the
6 evidence is in. Keep an open mind until you start your
7 deliberations at the end of the case.

8 If you wish, you may take notes, but if you do,
9 remember that your notes serve merely as an aid to your own
10 memory and not a substitute for it. And, please, leave your
11 notes in the jury room when you leave at night.

12 I've already talked about sidebar. And I thank you
13 for putting up with us when on occasion we have to do that.

14 Now, the trial is about to begin. First the
15 Government will make an opening statement, which is simply a
16 forecast of the evidence.

17 Next, the defense attorney may, but does not have
18 to, make an opening statement. And I'll remind you that
19 opening statements are neither evidence nor arguments.
20 They're simply a forecast of the evidence.

21 Next, the Government will present its witnesses and
22 counsel for the defendant may cross-examine them. Following
23 the Government's case tdefendant may, if he wishes, present
24 witnesses whom the Government may cross-examine.

25 After all the evidence is in and I've given you

1 general instructions, the attorneys will come back and
2 present their closing arguments. Then the Court will give
3 you final instructions on the law and ask you to retire to
4 deliberate on your verdict.

5 That's the process that we'll follow from this
6 point forward.

7 Opening statements being so close to the lunch
8 hour, normally we would go to 1 o'clock before breaking for
9 lunch. But in this case I'll ask you to listen carefully to
10 the opening statements. And when they're done we'll break
11 for lunch and come back to hear the presentation of evidence.

12 Government ready to make its opening statement?

13 MR. GUINN: Yes, sir.

14 Opening opening.

15 MR. GUINN: If it please the Court, defense
16 counsel. Again my name is Lambert Guinn and I'm here today
17 with my tow counsel Tim Seilaff and the caseworker. We
18 represent the United States of America in this matter. Now
19 the defendant in this case Mr. Watkins is here today and he's
20 charged with one count of conspiracy to distribute controlled
21 substances within the Western District of North Carolina of
22 North Carolina. Specifically the Charlotte North Carolina
23 area. And like the judge said, opening statements are not
24 evidence and they're not argument. What they are is a
25 forecast of what the admissible evidence will be in this

1 case.

2 And so the evidence will show that back in 2020,
3 FBI agents in Charlotte, North Carolina and CMPD officers
4 were engaged in an investigation. They were investigating a
5 music group called the pressure game rap label. Now, most of
6 the individuals in the pressure gang rap label were
7 musicians. They were about the art and they were trying to
8 make music. Within that organization, there was a smaller
9 group of individuals that sold narcotics.

10 Now, the leader of the pressure gang was an
11 individual by the name of Steven Cloud. Law enforcement
12 officers were monitoring Steven Cloud and the investigation
13 was focused on him. And so on two occasions in October of
14 2020, once October 17th, 2020, and the second time October
15 the 24th, 2020, Mr. Steven Cloud ordered narcotics from
16 Atlanta, had those narcotics brought up to Charlotte, North
17 Carolina.

18 So on October the 17th, 2020, the evidence will
19 show that Mr. Cloud sent a woman named Jonquilla Sanders down
20 to Atlanta, Georgia, that Ms. Sanders met with the defendant
21 Mr. Watkins, she retrieved a box and brought that box back to
22 Charlotte, North Carolina and gave that to Mr. Cloud.

23 Mr. Sanders will -- Ms. Sanders will explain that
24 the substance, she knew what was in the box because she had
25 made a similar run for Mr. Cloud before.

1 Now, law enforcement officers were listening to
2 what was going on, but given how quickly everything was
3 happening, they couldn't do anything to intercept that
4 package.

5 So, on October the 24th, 2020, there was a second
6 run. And on that day Mr. Cloud sends a woman by the name of
7 Leticia Anderson down to Atlanta, Georgia. Ms. Anderson
8 meets with Mr. Watkins and is on her way back up. At this
9 point law enforcement are listening to what happens, they are
10 familiar with what had the week earlier and they stop
11 Ms. Anderson, her vehicle was searched and they find a
12 controlled substance called but alone. That's the controlled
13 substance we'll talk about today. You'll have an opportunity
14 to hear some wire tap calls we anticipate see some phone
15 location information and have the opportunity to hear from
16 one of those women that made that run for Mr. Cloud.

17 As we're kind of going through this case, we're
18 going to ask that you think about three things. First, the
19 two dates that I mentioned earlier, October the 17th, 2020,
20 and October the 24th, 2020. Those are very important dates.
21 As you're hearing about those dates, please think about the
22 sequence of events, the order in which things happen, and
23 think about how October the 17th relates to October the 24th.
24 We think that the events that occur on October the 17th are
25 going to help inform what occurred on the 24th and the events

1 that occurred on the 24th are going to help shed some
2 additional light about what happened October the 17th. So
3 think about those two days.

4 The second thing that we're going to ask you to
5 think about is that Mr. Watkins is charged with participating
6 in the conspiracy. So while it's important to think about
7 who had the controlled substance when and when the items were
8 seized, what's the additional items that are important, the
9 most important thing is the nature of the agreement. Who was
10 participating in this transaction and what was going on?
11 Think about all the parties and the role that they played in
12 this particular investigation.

13 And, finally, and what we think is the most
14 important thing is that you're going to hear additional name,
15 some of which will testify in court, some of which may not
16 testify in court. There's a conspiracy involving multiple
17 people. But today is Mr. Watkins' day in court. We ask that
18 you think about the role that he played in this case. Think
19 about the actions that he took in this particular case.

20 We think the evidence will show that none of this,
21 none of these events happened without Mr. Watkins down in
22 Atlanta first putting these items into the stream of
23 commerce. And because of that, we believe the evidence is
24 going to establish that Mr. Watkins is guilty of conspiring
25 with other individuals to distribute narcotics and at the end

1 of this trial we're going to ask that you return a verdict of
2 guilty. Thank you for your time and your participation in
3 this case.

4 THE COURT: Mr. Rael?

5 MR. RAEL: Thank you, Your Honor. Opening opening.

6 THE COURT: You can speak from there or from the
7 center, whichever is your preference.

8 MR. RAEL: All right. I think I'll stay here. If
9 you all can move to me.

10 Just a very quick introduction as I said just I
11 think a few minutes ago. I'm Samuel rail and I practice in
12 Atlanta, Georgia and have been since 1974 doing these kind of
13 cases, which are criminal cases.

14 Sometimes people wonder how can I be in Atlanta and
15 yet this is in Charlotte? But in Federal Court, you can try
16 cases anywhere with the judge's permissions. And I've tried
17 them in Chicago and in New York and Cincinnati and any number
18 of other places I can't remember. And so that's one thing.

19 And then sometimes people ask why am I doing this
20 in Atlanta instead of in Charlotte here? Because you know
21 Atlanta's just loaded with traffic and loaded with people and
22 all that kind of thing. And they wonder why am I there
23 instead of here? I don't know. But here I am. And now
24 we're going to deal with this case.

25 As the United States Attorney said, this thing

1 started with a gang called the pressure gang. Now, really,
2 they are a violent gang, a gang that, for the most part, is
3 in name only a rap gang. And both the FBI will be here today
4 and ATF and Homeland Security and Mecklenburg police, they
5 all had their eye on this pressure gang.

6 Then you have a situation where you have a lot of
7 other people involved. They're talking about two. They're
8 talking about a Sanders. They're talking about an Anderson.

9 I noticed that they indicated that only one of
10 these women who ran for cloud would be there before the
11 Court.

12 By the way, this fellow named cloud, really,
13 everybody knows him by zitty. And everybody knows my client
14 by Kenny man. And nobody would really know him otherwise.
15 He basically Ziggy is a mentor for my client. My client,
16 who's before you today, is a fellow who is an entertainer and
17 goes around and does rap and does rap with this Ziggy. And
18 his whole life is about nothing but music. Everything that
19 he touches is about music and is about the performing of that
20 music. And it then happens that Ziggy, who is the mentor to
21 Mr. Watkins, Kenny man, all of a sudden it turns out, and I
22 say all of a sudden because everybody doesn't know everybody
23 and how they do business, this guy, Ziggy, is a bad dude.
24 He's a guy who not only is running the pressure gang but he
25 is running drugs everywhere, cocaine and that Eutylone and

1 everything you could imagine. He carries a gun. He's pled
2 guilty to the same thing that Mr. Watkins is now here before
3 you to determine. Not only did he plead guilty but every
4 single other person who was involved in this conspiracy
5 decided to plead guilty. And there were many of these people
6 besides the people that were mentioned there was a fellow
7 named turn ham. He was buying narcotics 15 times from
8 CIA agents. Then you had one after the next. Wallace and he
9 was considered a leader in this pressure gang. And when you
10 get the indictment, you'll see how all of these people were
11 involved one way or the other in this.

12 So, Mr. Watkins sits here and he asks himself:
13 What is he doing here? He has never been in Charlotte until
14 now. He knows nothing about it. The two ladies that they
15 are saying that he dealt with with drugs, he doesn't even
16 know, ever. And yet somehow -- he does know Ziggy. He's
17 been around Ziggy for many, many years. And the evidence
18 will show that he has been dealing with him on music forever.

19 But, see, in the rap business, the money and the
20 notoriety is in Atlanta. It's not in Charlotte. In Atlanta
21 is where everybody wants to be, where Watkins is, Kenny man.
22 And in Atlanta, that's where he goes. So now these two
23 people, he doesn't know them, but they know him, at least one
24 of them, this Sanders lady. Sanders has she loves to party.
25 He knows that. She knows that. That's what she does. And

1 it begins July the 4th. A day that everybody can recognize.
2 And at that time she wants to be -- the main thing she wants
3 to be is part of some sort of record label. Whether it's
4 Mr. Watkins who has a record label or it is Ziggy who has a
5 record label or it's pressure gang folk. She definitely
6 wants to be part of it. This is her dream is to be part of a
7 situation where she can also, instead of being a wannabe,
8 she's somebody.

9 And so Ms. Sanders then goes to a party July the
10 4th. And unfortunately or fortunately, Ms. Sanders has some
11 kind of drug habit. I don't -- we'll let her say what her
12 drug of choice is. We know she's a huge drinker. And at the
13 time of July 4th, she does all of that and more. And the
14 evidence will further show you that then there's a little
15 confrontation, more than a little confrontation, a large
16 confrontation. We've got a woman who does a lot of drug talk
17 and comes over and now you've got Kenny man here. And she
18 goes over and she says some very nasty things. And he could
19 ignore it. But didn't ignore it. And he caught her up on
20 that and said you will not do this. On July 4th, again. She
21 didn't like that. Not even one little bit.

22 So when the time came to go to the FBI and say what
23 happened, it was very easy, easy peasy for her to come to
24 say, yeah, he's the one that I got drugs from. Even though,
25 of course, the evidence shows that she didn't know what was

1 in a box. But the box was given back to Ziggy. And from
2 that, they conclude how that a drug transaction.

3 She's supposedly has a wad of cash, several was of
4 cash. And she gives that to Kenny man. And from that they
5 conclude, well, there was some was of cash. We're the FBI.
6 And so she got a box. Drugs. That's the case that they will
7 have as it relates to Ms. Sanders.

8 Now, as to Ms. Anderson, this is really something
9 special because up until just a few days ago, the first of
10 June, no one really knew what was Ms. Anderson going to say?
11 Was she going to say, like Ms. Sanders has said, it's him, or
12 something different? Who knew? Except that both United
13 States Attorneys as well as a Stephen Parker decided to
14 interview her at the jail where she was housed and where she
15 stays. And thank goodness, actually, that they did, because
16 then the truth came out, which is verified by witness after
17 witness that we have as to what we know happened.

18 She said she never, ever went to Mr. Watkins'
19 studio. She said that she never had met him until that very
20 day. She said that she had never spoke with him on the
21 phone. It might have been a three-way, but that's it. She
22 said, more important, that she never, ever, ever got any
23 drugs from him. That she got it from someone else, didn't
24 want to name who that person was. But it was definitely not
25 him whatsoever.

1 And then money that Mr. Watkins had, he actually
2 gave to Ziggy for stuff that had to do with music. And she
3 said that she didn't really want to be a witness for the
4 defense. Well, she's under subpoena. And maybe she will,
5 maybe she won't. I don't like to bring people in who are
6 under subpoena and examine them like that. But that may well
7 occur. And it may not. But we do know that when the
8 FBI came and both of those U.S. Attorneys came, they said
9 that on that day that they're trying to talk about, which is
10 October the 24th, she said she did not supply any pills to
11 him. She met someone else. And here's the evidence. She
12 got there in Charlotte maybe 10 in the morning. When she got
13 money that she was going to get from Mr. Watkins for Ziggy
14 for music, that was about at least 11:30 or thereabouts. At
15 10 o'clock she did her deal with this other person who she
16 won't tell you who it is because she says that he's not
17 involved in the conspiracy and I ain't telling. Okay.
18 That's up to her. But not him. At all. She says that to
19 these fellows. But yet they still want to maintain that when
20 there was telephone calls, maybe she did. And what calls are
21 the real question here? You will see that there's something
22 also very interesting that happened here. The very night
23 that he's entertaining at a club, club diamond in Atlanta,
24 and they finish late, and what happens? He gets shot.
25 Someone comes to his studio and there's a shooting. It's

1 important. Because the shooting helps the witnesses know
2 what really occurred between Ms. Anderson, besides what
3 Ms. Anderson says, and knows what happened, knows that what
4 happened there was that he was lucky to save his life, knows,
5 and we have evidence to prove that but for him helping
6 someone, someone would have been in big, big trouble. His
7 interest in trying to do some kind of drug deal after that,
8 was something else, zero point zero, nada. Does not do any
9 drugs of any kind ever. He is a Muslim. It's against his
10 way to do anything like that. And he has a Muslim wife,
11 which differs apparently from a regular wife because they
12 don't live together and they don't stay together and it's
13 different. Let her explain. But what I know is that at the
14 end of the day, he is a fellow who works and the evidence
15 will show all the time, day and night, has a trucking
16 business while he does his studio and the most important
17 thing of all is the music. And everyone apparently wants to
18 be involvedle in music businesses. But very few people get
19 to be involved in the music business. It's not easy. And
20 it's not easy because it's not how you sing or how you act or
21 how you dance, but it's in distribution. And if you don't
22 have good distribution, you don't have anything at all. He
23 can distribute like no one can and does that all the time.
24 That's his life. Along with his life that he tries to live
25 all the time with his kids and his family and everything in

1 between. But that's his essence. And yet he works
2 everywhere every time but they decide to bring a case based
3 upon one person who says he didn't do it and now one person
4 who says yeah, he did. But when that one person who says
5 yeah, he did, no. Look, there's something further. They're
6 not just coming out of thin air about this Anderson. Ms.
7 Anderson got stopped right after she met with Mr. Watkins.
8 When she got stopped, when I say right after, that may be
9 about 11:30, 12 o'clock, something like that. She gets
10 stopped by the police Georgia, Franklin Georgia, small town
11 Georgia, because they say that she's speeding. And, not
12 really. It's because the FBI is calling and saying: We
13 think there may be a drug transaction going on. And she gets
14 stopped. And when she gets stopped, they find almost \$5,000
15 in her money and they find -- which she got from Kenny man,
16 which will prove to you is true and then also got -- and she
17 also had in her car 5.3 pounds of dangerous drugs, this
18 Eutylone. The Eutylone is like MDMA only it's not mated by
19 the folks over at Pfizer, it's made, I don't know, somebody
20 in a bathtub. And they make that, and those drugs were found
21 in her car. So they try to put two and two together and they
22 say well, she met with Kenny man and she got stopped at 2 in
23 the afternoon, she must have gotten these drugs from him, who
24 else? Even though 10 a.m. we know precisely that she got the
25 drugs from her own and from other evidence that we will

1 present to you that will have you understand absolutely and
2 completely without hesitation of any kind that she got them
3 from someone else. Period.

4 Let the evidence show you what we know, that person
5 after person after the person has come here from Atlanta and
6 gone to the expense to be here to talk about the details of
7 this case, and every single one of those people, without
8 exception, will show you that this is a terrible injustice.
9 And we are here to deal with justice. And you will discover
10 that this man is not guilty. Thank you.

11 THE COURT: Members of the Jury, normally we'd go
12 into the evidence. But it's over the noon hour. And I think
13 what we'll do, rather than start with the evidence and break,
14 we'll take our lunch hour at this time and come back for the
15 presentation of evidence.

16 While you take a lunch break, I would ask you to do
17 two things. One is not talk about the case with yourselves
18 or anyone else. The second one is to keep an open mind
19 because all you've heard right now is the opening statements
20 of the attorneys. You haven't heard any evidence at all.

21 And so with those two instructions, we'll take a
22 lunch break and ask you to be back at 1:15.

23 (The jury left the courtroom at time .m., and the
24 following proceedings were had out of the presence of
25 the jury.)

1 THE COURT: At ease, we'll come back at 1 cloak.
2 If there's any legal issues to take up then and be ready for
3 the jury to come back at 1:15.

4 (Recess held.)
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